

Understanding the Beasts

Revelation 13

Last week Pastor Dave did a great job talking us through Revelation 12, which seems to be a general overview presentation of the spiritual battle story of history concerning Jesus and Satan. It was mentioned that this passage is often used to describe Satan's rebellion in Heaven that occurred *before* creation, and maybe it is, in an out of chronology type way, but it pretty clearly seems to at least be talking about a specific spiritual consequence event that will, in the future, take place during the 3.5 year Tribulation time. Like Pastor Dave said, it's probably a both and type situation, but the context and wording definitely favors this as being a specific event that will take place at the time of the Great Tribulation. So perhaps the idea is that yes, Satan did a rebellion in Heaven and several angels left with him, but he hasn't yet been blocked out of Heaven- he has still been able to come and go and interact with God (as we see is the case in the book of Job), but at the time of the Great Tribulation- at *that* time in the future, he will then be fully blocked from Heaven and will be 100% confined to Earth during that last 3.5 years before Jesus returns and then locks him away for 1000 years, then ultimately destroys him in the lake of fire after that time.

And so now what we read in chapter 13 is describing what will happen during that 3.5 years when Satan, also referred to as the dragon and the serpent, what will happen during that time when he will be confined, at the end of time, to the physical world of Earth. And my hope this morning is that we might see some things we have never noticed, or perhaps see the scriptures in a more clear light than we have in the past- and to thus be informed, prepared, and on alert- ready to recognize the deception that will come- so that we won't be part of those deceived. Before we begin reading, it's worth defining a few terms. There is going to be mentioned heads, horns, and crowns- and to understand what on earth is being talked about, we have to look to

some other passages- letting scripture interpret scripture. The book of Daniel, referring to end times prophecies, defines heads and horns as representing earthly kingdoms, and Revelation chapter 17 confirms this. **Revelation 17:9-10** defines the 7 heads as 7 kings/kingdoms- all of which- except for one, would have been known and understood by John and anyone else during the time in which John wrote this. Then **verse 12** of that chapter 17 defines the 10 horns as kingdoms that would arise after John- they would be kingdoms of the future- kings and kingdoms ruling at the time of the 3.5 year Great Tribulation. And the crowns, as we'll see, note which kingdoms are ruling- which time period of rule is being spoken of. With that understanding, let's go ahead and look at verse 1, and later we'll have a few more terms/characters to define. **Verse 1 chapter 13...**

Ok, this is really interesting, let me explain why. The previous chapter 12 gave us the definition of who the dragon is, **verse 9 of chapter 12** tells us the dragon is Satan, the serpent, the deceiver. **Verse 3 of chapter 12** tells us that Satan the deceiving serpent dragon was seen as having 7 heads and 10 horns. And this type of language is very figurative, these words are attempting to convey to us spiritual realities and connections, rather than paint a mental picture of the appearance of Satan. John's not describing physical attributes so that we can identify Satan when we see him walking down the street- no, again, this language is prompting us to think spiritually/symbolically, and not focus on a literal physical image description. So when Satan the dragon, in chapter 12 verse 3 is described as having 7 heads wearing crowns when he stands to devour the Messiah child- in light of what Daniel says, and in light of what Revelation 17 says- the idea is that Satan, during that time, was in control of 7 earthly kingdoms. And the heads have horns- again the horns are defined in chapter 17 as kingdoms yet to come. So up through the time of Christ, there were 7 historical kingdoms of the earth, from which 10 horn kingdoms would grow. Right, with animals that have horns, the head comes first, and

then the horns grow. Notice now in verse 1 of chapter 13, that a *beast* (not the dragon, but a different animal), is now described having the 7 heads and 10 horns, but it mentions the horns *first* and that the horns (not the heads) are now wearing the crowns.

This tells us 2 things- 1.) this passage is now describing this future timeframe in which the Great Tribulation will occur- the 7 historical kingdoms of the past are no longer ruling, but they have given birth to the 10 horn kingdoms who are now wearing the crowns, ruling as the world's 10 super powers. 2.) Secondly, the *dragon* was previously described as having 7 heads, 10 horns, but now it is the *beast* coming up out of the sea having the 7 heads, 10 horns. In other words, Satan the dragon, has somehow created a new entity in *his* likeness (again, probably not *physical* image likeness, but rather spiritual-characteristic likeness). As Jesus was presented on earth in the likeness of God in order to point us to His Kingdom, now Satan is imitating that move and is presenting an entity that displays *his* likeness and points to *his* earthly kingdom.

Not only does this new beast entity represent Satan the dragon and the kingdoms he is in control of, but the beast *itself* is a kingdom. **Revelation 17:11** tells us this- this beast is a kingdom who is one of the original 7 kingdoms, and could also in a sense be considered an eighth kingdom. In other words, the idea seems to be that the beast is a nation state kingdom, who controls the 10 other world powers, that manifest Satan the dragon's will on earth during the Great Tribulation. **Verse 2...**

There are different ideas out there as to the symbolic meaning of the leopard, bear, lion qualities- each definitely conveying the idea of strength and fierceness. Many have assigned specific historical kingdoms to each description, these descriptions are mentioned in the book of Daniel, and so there are some who equate these descriptions to kingdoms Daniel would have been familiar with- the leopard

representing the Macedonian empire, the bear as the Persians, the lion as the Babylonians; and I've also seen others do the same but using modern nations. Maybe there is some sort of metaphorical allusion to *both* the historic Daniel nations and even modern day countries. But there aren't any scriptures, at least that I've discovered yet, that specifically define these descriptions, so we probably need to be careful making any strong assumptions here concerning the descriptions. I personally have a theory I'm working on, but I need a little more time to analyze it. I think for now, the best we can do here in this verse is note that this beast nation state entity that uses the other 10 ruling nation state entities is fierce and strong, and in some way is like the powerful nations that were fighting for world domination during Daniel's time, and this entity acts on the authority of Satan the dragon. **Verse 3** gives us another cryptic clue to throw into the mix...

Not to give anything away yet, but the Bible is not yet referring to the Anti-Christ or false prophet- that comes up later starting in verse 11. Rather, here in verse 3 we are still talking about the beast nation state conglomerate, and it is said that one of the heads (remember, scripturally that the 7 heads are defined as kingdoms that were ruling, that birth the 10 horn kingdoms that *will* be ruling during the Tribulation) -one of the head kingdoms was fatally wounded. In other words, this particular nation state was killed off- it was conquered, it ceased to exist, and *yet* in this future day it will have been resurrected- the country re-formed, re-birthed. It seems that a significant part of this beast nation state ruling entity will be composed of a historical nation state/country that was erased from the map, but in the time of the Tribulation it will have been by then re-established as that same country. And the world will be amazed, and will follow this beastly nation state union. I imagine the world will be surprised at the feats of this entity, they will highly esteem the authority and governing powers of this entity, they will cheer on the military tactics of this entity. **Verse 4** confirms this idea...

I personally don't imagine people will be knowingly, intentionally worshiping Satan the dragon, I think rather the Bible is just clarifying that in the worship of this beastly nation state union, they will in fact be worshiping Satan who is behind the scenes, calling the shots. I think people will just be really deceived, excited about this world power, perhaps not even realizing that it is Satan giving the power. They'll be like- "Dude, the military force is amazing, no one can defeat them, they crush and take victory so quickly, they are uniting the world, let's rally around them!" **Verses 5 and 6...**

So this beastly state union will be *aware* of God, but in the things they do, the things they say- they will be very arrogant and will blaspheme against Him and His name. The idea of blasphemy is calling evil good, and good evil. So this entity, will invoke God's name in a wrong, upside-down way. Perhaps they will claim God is for them, when He is against them, perhaps they will say God wants such and such, when God does not want such and such, perhaps they will make war claiming it is for God, when God does not sanction that war. There will be a perversion of what is good, there will be a deception, there will be a using of God's name- maybe even a using of scripture- in a way that is not truthful or appropriate.

They will even blaspheme those in Heaven, those in whom God dwells- His people, His tabernacle- Christians. True followers of Jesus will be called evil. False followers- pretenders, those using Christianity for their own personal gain- will be called good. On a side note, take note that this verse again emphasizes the idea of God's dwelling place being in the tabernacle, house, temple- of His *people* in Heaven- not a tabernacle, house, temple built on earth by human hands. **Verse 7...**

This nation state union will have in it's cross-hairs followers of Jesus, believers, Christians- and will overcome them. That's an interesting word choice here- remember when we studied the letters to

the 7 churches- each letter stated reward for those who were *overcomers*. So is the Bible contradicting itself here? No- of course not! We as followers of Christ may be overcome *physically* by those who are in this world, but we overcome *spiritually*- and through *that* victory, we gain the new physical world that is to come. And not only does this entity rule through the 1 nation ruling the 10, but as the end of verse 7 says- this entity holds authority over all the world, including even all the lesser nations, tribes, people groups. **Verse 8** continues this idea...

It says all will worship *him*, but again, this is not a person, but rather a national ruling entity. In Greek the word here can mean a variety of things- he, she, it, they, them etc. Other translations, like the ESV, say "it" which is probably a better translation given the context of what is being said. All will worship this uniting, ruling government- with exception to those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life- those who have received the forgiveness of Jesus the Messiah. And God, in His perfect knowledge, knew even at the beginning of time, at the foundation of the world- He already knew and had already written in His book those who would one day chose to receive Jesus. An absolutely incredible truth to think about! God saw you before you even existed, and knew that one day you would choose to follow Him. **Verses 9-10...**

Verse 10 is a little vague in the Greek- the way it's worded it could be translated 2 different ways. It either says: if anyone is destined to go into captivity, into captivity he will go, if anyone is destined to be killed, he will in fact be killed (the ESV translates it like this); *OR* it says he who leads others into captivity- he himself will be taken captive, and he who kills with the sword, he himself will be killed with the sword. (the King James translates it as this) It's funny to me that the NASB that I'm reading from this morning mixes the 2 translation thoughts- they do the captivity statement the way the ESV does it, and the kill with the sword statement the way the King James does it. They were like- "it could

grammatically go either way- well, let's do half of the verse one way and the second half the other way." That's really funny to me. Letting scripture interpret scripture, we do have Jesus saying in Matthew 26 that "those who take up the sword will perish by the sword," but I think it probably makes more sense in the context to reference **Jeremiah 15:2**, speaking of judgement coming for God's people, it says

Those destined for death, to death; And those destined for the sword, to the sword; And those destined for famine, to famine; And those destined for captivity, to captivity." Through the lens of this Jeremiah verse is probably the better way to translate this verse in Revelation, especially in light of John immediately saying "*here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.*" Followers of Jesus- saints, would not be leading anyone into captivity nor would be killing others with swords- so they would have nothing to persevere through if that was the meaning- but if the meaning is that Christians who are appointed to be captured and killed during this time, will be captured and killed- then yes, that would call for perseverance and encouragement in faith for believers. God is giving us a warning in advance so that we don't get mad at Him, or lose hope, or turn away in our faith, or get deceived when bad things happen to other believers- we just have to persevere in our faith and chalk it up to it being part of the temporary bad things that will occur right before Jesus returns and makes all things new and right. John's like, it is what it is- don't let your faith be affected by what will happen, hold on- victory is coming. **Verse 11...**

Here's where we are introduced to the false prophet, he's the *2nd* beast, the beast coming up from the *earth* as opposed to the previous one who came up from the *sea*. Most equate this description to be the Anti-Christ figure that John mentioned before in his letters of 1st and 2nd John; as well as the same figure 2nd Thessalonians 2 mentions as the "man of lawlessness" that must come first before Jesus returns and we are gathered to him. He has two horns- again, this is not meant to be

a physical description of his appearance- that'd be real easy right- we'd be like "I know who the Anti-Christ will be- he'll be the only human with 2 horns growing out of his head!" No, as I mentioned earlier, the horns represent kingdoms, and this is symbolically pointing us to some clues to recognize. Knowing that the horns represent kingdoms- with the description being that the horns are like *lamb* horns- think of a little baby sheep- a lamb- who would have new, little horn stubs instead of old, fully grown, big horns like an adult ram- I think the idea being conveyed here is that this entity somehow represents 2 young nations. Young being relative, young in contrast to historically old nations like China, Iran, or Egypt. So this figure somehow represents, or is coming from, or rules over- a kingdom made from 2 different relatively younger kingdoms. **Verse 12...**

Ok, so it's not that the 1st nation state union beast entity goes away, no- it's that this 2nd beast, this Anti-Christ figure operates *within* the 1st nation state union beast entity. It seems to me that he is the leader of this nation state union, and is wanting to convince everyone to like and be a part of this unifying governing system- and again this one kingdom that was dismantled but then re-formed is emphasized again- this must be a significant detail that John wants the reader to be aware of. It's going to be mentioned again even, and what's interesting is that chapter 17, remember I said that chapter 17:11 tells us that this beast nation state union is actually *itself* one of the 7 original kingdoms, and in a sense could be considered an 8th- **verse 8 of chapter 17** seems to tie what ever primary nation that rules over the 10 other kingdoms, it seems to label that leading nation as the nation who was the head that was fatally wounded, that would be healed and re-formed in the future. **Revelation 17:8...**

Now listen very closely- in other words, the angel is telling John- the beast nation state described in chapter 13 that we're reading right now, that nation state that will unify and rule the other 10, it was not

currently functioning as a nation state during John's life, but it was previously, and it will again be in the future, but will ultimately be destroyed. **Verses 13-14...**

This anti-christ false prophet beast, using the vehicle of the nationstate beast will perform great wonders- awesome displays of power, perhaps even great military feats, maybe even huge medical advances, maybe miraculous provisions of food or shelter- and the idea is to get the world to place their trust in this entity. To be in awe, to worship it. And I don't think it'll necessarily look like bow down and worship type worship- but this nation state union will be revered around the world, world decisions will be made in order to honor and prosper this entity, it will be worshiped in how people revere it and speak only good of its miraculous power, strength, and rule.

Notice here the imitation of God and the trinity- God sends Jesus to Earth to bear His image; and the Holy Spirit unites with power the followers into a Kingdom for God. Here Satan the dragon sends a beast nation state to bear His image; and a beast leader through displays of power unites the followers into an earthly kingdom for Satan.

And this kingdom for Satan will be represented by an image- I think our minds typically think golden figure statue when we read something like this, but I think it'll be way more subtle, the image being referred to will probably be something more like a logo on a flag- some kind of imagery that represents this nation that was, that died off, that is now resurrected and is "uniting" the world through its "miraculous" control and conquering. **Verse 15...**

The beast leader of this beast state will somehow cause the image representing the beast state to "come alive," and enable it to take notice of who is in line with the beast state causes, and who is not- and thus take out those who are not in line. I can't help but think of A.I. (Artificial

Intelligence) when I read this. We don't know for sure, but I don't think it's too far fetched to imagine a networked computer system, bearing the logo of this governing entity, powered by A.I., used to track, analyze, and make life and death decisions for individuals based on their allegiance to this governing entity. Verse 16 to the end... **(16-18)**

Eventually, those who resist this entity, who refuse to be affiliated and marked with it's symbol, will be denied the right to transact. Heavy trade sanctions placed on them. Keep in mind, that all the other events described in Revelation- the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 thunders, 7 bowls, all seem to be happening in this same 3.5 year timeframe that this beast leader is ruling from a beast nation state, who kills the 2 witnesses in Jerusalem and leaves their bodies in the streets in order for the world to see what happens to those who oppose this government. Another clue is given in verse 18, the number of the beast nation state is calculated as six hundred and sixty six. You've probably heard this number referred to as the mark of the beast- and I think the way it's worded here in scripture is that the number is in reference not to the beast anti-christ leader, but rather the beast nation state. Somehow the number 666 represents the beast nation state, whether it be some mathematical calculation, or it be in reference to the image mentioned that *represents* the nation state.

There's a system in Greek and Hebrew thought that a name can mean a number, and a number can mean a name, and in Hebrew that idea is called *Gematria*. The idea is that each letter of the alphabet is assigned a numeric value based on it's position in the alphabet. Simple English Gematria would assign the letter a as 1, b as 2, c as 3 and so forth all the way up to z as 26. Assigning each letter in a word it's appropriate value, you would then add up all the letters in a word and get a sum value- for a long time people have played with this type code system in order to try to infer who might be the anti-christ- but again, the Bible seems to be saying this in reference to the empire state union and

not the false prophet leader of that union, plus there are different Gematria systems out there, different ways to calculate, different spellings, different results depending on what language you spell a name or word in, etc.- so it's really hard to draw any firm conclusions based on this type of calculation.

Emperor Nero Caesar- supposedly his name in gematria code tallies up to 666, and maybe that's significant- again I don't think we can be sure that is what the Bible is telling us to assume here, obviously Nero Caesar was a bad dude and "anti-christ like" in the way that he persecuted Christians, but again this seems to be referring to the governing *state* not a person, and it's pretty clear this is talking about a *future* state entity that will be present during the 3.5 year tribulation, so therefore the 666 serves as a clue to help identify the state entity or the state entity logo- but I imagine that entity will be somewhat *like* Nero Caesar in their actions, so maybe there's something there.

I'm also working on a personal theory on this one as well, but again need a little more time to test it. All this to say, I think for now this number will probably remain somewhat of a mystery until we enter into the 3.5 year timeline- more than likely at that time it will become much clearer.

At least in a general, spiritual sense, the idea is that the number 7 is a Godly number of completion, and the number 6 is close- at first glance 6 M&Ms would be hard to tell from 7 M&Ms, but 6 falls just short of that number 7 completion. 6 repeated in a sequence of 3 just emphasizes the re-occurring falling short humanist efforts to get to a state of completion, rest, peace, finality that only God can bring through His sequences of 7 that are described throughout the book of Revelation.

But in closing, what I want you to notice is the contrast we immediately see if we peak ahead to **verse 1 of chapter 14**. There we see the 144,000 that we read about back in chapter 7, they are mentioned again, and this time they are described as being in Heaven, in God's throne room, instead of on Earth where they were described before. As I've mentioned at the time we studied chapter 7, it seems this number is figurative, and represents the large multitude of peoples from every nation across the Earth who belong to Jesus and will reign with Him in His kingdom.

You see, Satan's false imitation trinity of dragon, beast nation, and beast leader is summed up- is represented by- the number 666, a number that figuratively indicates falling short 3 different times. The dragon will fall short- 6. The beast nation will fall short- 6. The beast leader will fall short- 6. But the real thing, the real trinity of God, Jesus, Holy Spirit- their continued acts of the complete number 7 result in a bigger number- 144,000- a number that figuratively indicates a great multitude of people from all over the earth, purchased by God for victory, to rule and reign with King Jesus for all eternity. These are those who will refuse to align themselves with the earthly beast ruling empire, they will refuse to have themselves marked with the indicator of belonging to the world system- and as a result will not be able to buy or sell, and many will die or be killed- counted as martyrs, as mentioned during the 5th seal back in chapter 6.

But in refusing the mark of a temporary governing power, they receive the mark of an *eternal* governing power. The eternally supreme, ultimate authority, eternal power of God Almighty King Jesus Christ- marks them with His name.